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SUBJECT: Goma Report September 19: Masisi Fighting

¶1. (SBU) Summary: MONUC helicopters fired on CNDP four miles south of Masisi, forestalling a possible CNDP move on Masisi or Katale. Minister of Defense warned the facilitation team that it had only two more days to get Nkunda's agreement to the disengagement plan and then use of force ("contraindre") would be necessary. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) CNDP official Muiti called poloff mid-morning September 19 to say that FARDC, PARECO, and FDLR were continuing to attack CNDP from the west (from the direction of Masisi and 81st brigade headquarters at Katale). He described President Kabila's statements to the press the previous day as a "declaration of war." He repeated CNDP's insistence on direct talks with the government in Addis Ababa or Nairobi and CNDP's refusal to meet either at Kimoka or Goma air terminal, whatever security assurances MONUC might give. CNDP did not, he said, trust MONUC.

¶3. (SBU) North Kivu brigade commander Brigadier General Rawat told facilitation members late afternoon September 19 that fighting over the past 36 hours had shifted to the Masisi area. North Kivu brigade had detected several columns of CNDP, from 20 to 60 men, moving out of CNDP territory both north and south of Masisi and Katale. There have been skirmishes between CNDP and PARECO. On September 18, North Kivu brigade had already detected a camp of CNDP troops four miles south of Masisi, well west of CNDP territory, and had warned them to leave the area. Two MONUC attack helicopters were dispatched in the morning September 19 and fired warning shots at the camp. The helicopters then returned to the camp, ascertained that the CNDP troops had not departed, and fired ten rockets, with six of the rockets hitting the CNDP camp. The CNDP troops immediately withdrew. (Note: FARDC also sent in two attack helicopters, which also fired shots, but ineffectively at too far distance. Reports that a FARDC helicopter was shot down are inaccurate. End note.) Rawat regretted having to use the attack helicopters, but his assessment was that CNDP was attempting a move against Masisi and Katale. He said that the South African contingent present in Masisi town was under pressure from the 15,000 IDPs who gathered around the contingent and had begun to throw rocks, out of fear of a CNDP attack and because the contingent had run out of food to hand out.

¶4. (SBU) Midday September 19, Minister of Defense Chikez (who has been in North Kivu for two weeks) called a meeting of MONUC and the facilitation team. Amani National Coordinator Malu Malu, Joint Technical Chairman Etumba, "Operations Commander" General Lukama, and North Kivu Governor Paluku were present. There was much discussion of the disengagement plan which, Chikez said, the government embraced with its "whole heart." But his main purpose was to convey to the facilitation team that it was the latter's responsibility to get Nkunda on board with the plan, that it had only two more days to accomplish that essential goal (according to the plan's calendar), and that if that were not accomplished, then MONUC would have to move quickly from a persuasive ("convaincre") posture to a compelling ("contraindre") posture against CNDP. (Note: "Contraindre" means use of force or a believable threat of

use of force.) Malu Malu said that, in a telephone conversation he had just had with SRSG Doss, Doss had assured him that MONUC would "do everything necessary" to use force against CNDP in Masisi. Chihez and Etumba asserted that CNDP had launched an offensive in Masisi, and Malu Malu said that CNDP had made multiple attacks on PARECO.

¶5. (SBU) Deputy Chief of Staff Colonel Cunliffe, after giving a review of the disengagement plan, related that there had been persistent exchanges of fire in the environs of Masisi and Katale. The North Kivu brigade, he said, had sent out patrols who, in one area (Kahengole), had observed FDLR and PARECO operating together in the early hours of the morning, with FARDC not far away. This statement (implication of FARDC complicity with FDLR) incurred a barrage of outrage from Chihez, Etumba, and the governor of North Kivu, who condemned Cunliffe personally and threatened to have him thrown out of the country. (Note: Twenty minutes was consumed by this kind of vituperation; fortunately, Col. Cunliffe has little French and no one on the facilitation side cared to translate the increasingly abusive language that the Minister and Etumba heaped on him. End note.) Etumba also objected to what he described as an incident of North Kivu brigade's firing on FARDC.

¶6. (SBU) Minister Chihez reiterated that on Day D plus 3 there would be an "evaluation" of the international facilitation, and that if CNDP had not agreed to comply with the disengagement plan, the Minister implied, there would be dire (but unspecified) consequences. (Note: Earlier in the day, a member of the Amani hierarchy who has regular contact with CNDP said that senior Kinshasa officials presently in Goma, including Minister Chihez, have been in contact with civil-society leaders about organizing

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anti-MONUC and possibly anti-Facilitation demonstrations. An expatriate who has close ties to CNDP, in a subsequent conversation, told us that the CNDP operations to which MONUC responded were not in fact directed against FARDC but were responses to PARECO/FDLR moves toward CNDP territory. The expatriate said that unless MONUC is even-handed with respect not only to FARDC vs. CNDP, but also PARECO and its FDLR allies, there was little chance that CNDP would respond to efforts to get it back into a cease-fire process. End Note.)

¶7. (SBU) Minister Chihez further announced that he was prepared, at SRSG Doss's request, to issue a statement reaffirming the government's commitment to the January cease-fire and its urgent demand that all armed groups adhere to it. The drafting of this statement (presumably now issued to the press) was done on the basis of Etumba's hand-written notes, transcribed by a French MONUC officer sitting at a computer and trying to keep up with drafting suggestions coming from all sides.

¶8. (SBU) Eastern Coordinator Alpha Sow afterward told poloff that the government (through Tutsi businessmen Emmanuel Kamanzi and Bizima Karaha) and MONUC had thus far failed to reach Nkunda or persuade CNDP to agree to a meeting to discuss the disengagement plan. MONUC Force Commander General Gaye is due back in Goma September 20, and one of his objectives is to try to meet Nkunda to present the MONUC disengagement plan. As of September 19 at 19:00, no contact with the CNDP leadership has been established, and there is no realistic prospect that there will be anyone available on the CNDP side for General Gaye (whom CNDP has been attacking in its website, referring to a French arrest warrant against him).

GARVELINK